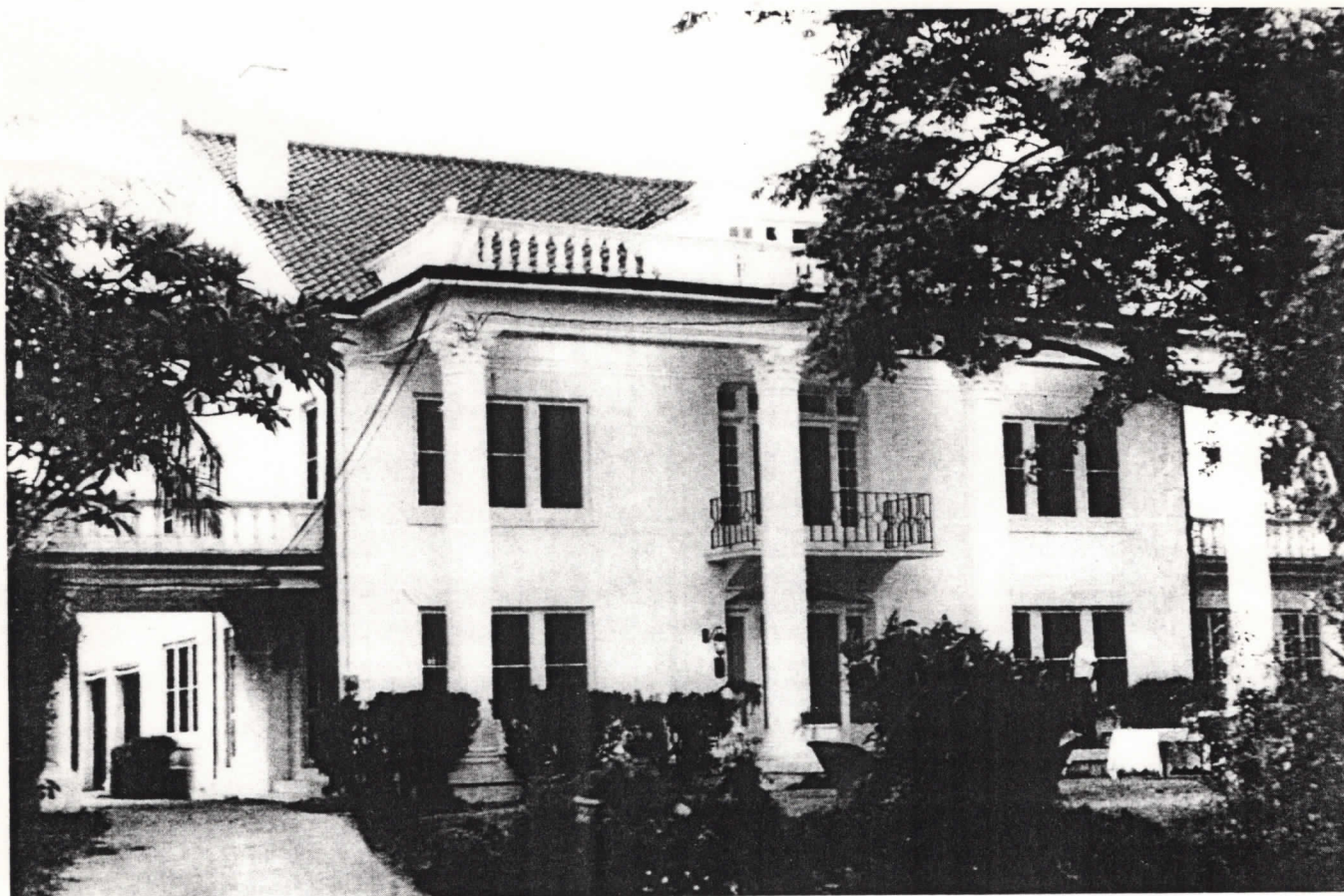


THE SURVIVOR

by Becky Roper Matkov



The Nolan/Harris home, shown in earlier years, has provided an elegant setting for many Brickell social events.

THE STATELY COLONIAL-style home on Brickell Avenue was only a year old when the Killer Hurricane of 1926 almost obliterated Miami. It survived then, and it survived Hurricane Andrew sixty-six years later, despite windows that were bowing in precariously from the fierce winds.

Henriette Harris has lived in the house for all those years. Her father, George Nolan, Sr., had moved his family from Orlando to Miami in 1921 when he became president of the new Miami National Bank. Henriette's mother was from Georgia and "always wanted a big, Southern colonial home. And that's what my father built for her," Henriette recalls.

Nicknamed "Millionaire's Row," Brickell Avenue at that time was lined with beautiful homes owned by the prominent. Carl Fisher, developer of Miami beach, James Deering, Louis

Tiffany, and William Jennings Bryan all had residences there.

Now 82 years old and actively involved in Dade Heritage Trust, the Villagers, the Coconut Grove Woman's Club and the Miami Pioneers Club, Henriette remembers well the early years along Brickell. Walking across the street to attend classes at Miss Harris' (no relation) School for Young Ladies. The teas and parties. The dances in the third floor ballroom of the Nolan house. Her wedding to Clyde Harris in 1941, with the ceremony and reception for 200 at her home. Her daughter's wedding there years later.

She also remembers the years of the 1960s and '70s when one old mansion after another along Brickell was being bulldozed to make way for the highrise condominiums and bank buildings which have taken over the area. And she remembers when the City of Miami in the late 1970s told her that they

wanted to bulldoze her house unless she knocked down the huge Corinthian columns and balcony in the front. City zoning officials -- probably alerted, Henriette believes, by a developer who was seeking to buy Brickell property -- informed them that the aged columns, built of beach sand, were no longer safe and would have to be replaced or the house would be condemned. Unable to pay the cost of restoration, the family had to tear down the columns and remove the balcony, front porch, and porte cochere.

Since Hurricane Andrew damaged the roof, Henriette is replacing the roof with barrel tile, which it had originally. She wishes she could afford to replace the missing columns and porch as well, which would then enable the house to qualify for local historic designation.

Originally built for \$28,000, the

continued on page 28

The
house at
1548
Brickell
Avenue
today.



SURVIVOR continued

house is now valued at close to \$1 million. Numerous prospective developers have approached the family with offers for the land, but Henriette and her brother, George Nolan, Jr., want to preserve the house. With a large yard, eight bedrooms, gracious living spaces and a magnificent staircase, it would make an ideal bed and breakfast or consulate, Henriette feels.

"We wouldn't like to see it torn down for another apartment building," she says. "There are so many fond memories here, and so little of the past is left along Brickell."

It will be a sad loss to Miami's heritage if the economic forces of man end up destroying what the devastating blows of nature couldn't.

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Becky Roper Matkov, the founder and editor of *Preservation Today*, is the co-author of *Florida's Historic Restaurants and their recipes*. She has served in the past as president of Dade Heritage Trust and as chairman of the State Historic Preservation Advisory Council.



Owner
Henriette
Harris sits in
the gracious
living room
under a
portrait of her
father, George
Nolan, Sr.,
who built the
Southern
colonial in
1925.